

**The Education System Facing the Challenges
Of the 21st Century
Country: Republic of the Philippines**

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Department of Education**

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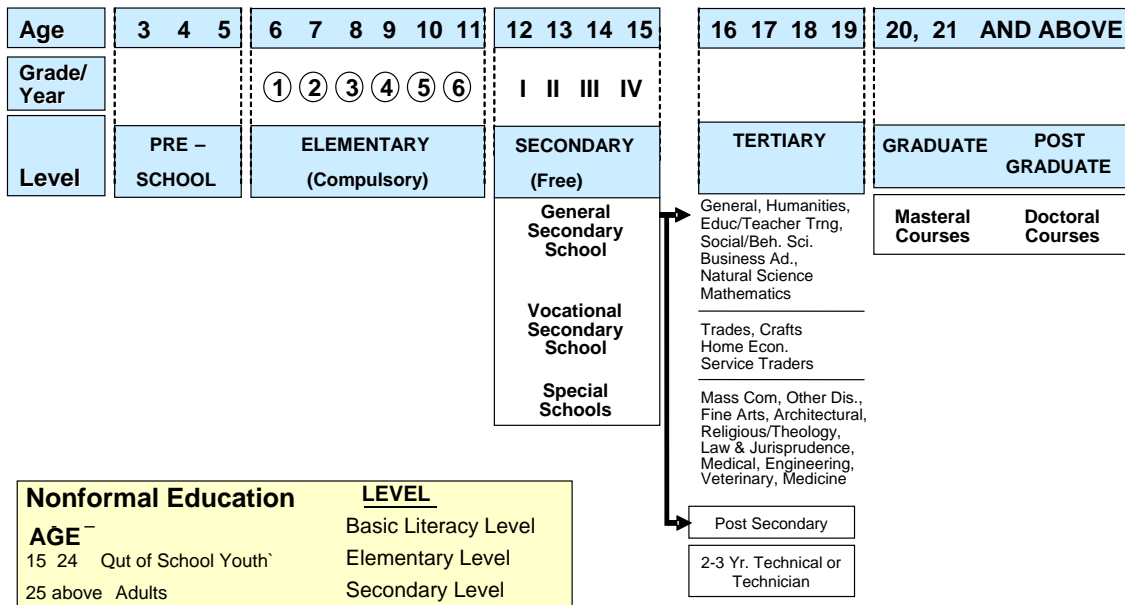
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I. Overview of the Philippine Educational System

1. The Philippines is classified among the lower middle income economies in the world. Its system of education (*Figure 1*) may be seen to be among the shortest, consisting of 1-2 years preschool education, 6 years of free and compulsory primary education, 4 years of free secondary education, and 4-5 years of higher education. There is also post-secondary education for those who wish to pursue technical and vocational courses and join the labor force at an early age.

2. The official entry age is 6 years old for primary education and 12 years old for secondary education. Presently, the education system is characterized by average student participation, poor performance of students in local and international standardized tests, persistent inadequacies in basic learning resources, and is prone to political and economic developments unfolding within and outside the country. As such, it faces daunting challenges in meeting the demands of the 21st century, particularly that of providing equal opportunities to every Filipino who wish to seek quality education.

Figure 1. The Structure of Philippine Educational System



3. In terms of learning outcomes, preschool education develops competencies to prepare the children for formal primary education; the primary education provides competencies to prepare the children for secondary

education; and the secondary education provides competencies required of a functionally literate individual that can be used for either pursuing higher education, or for joining the world of work. Just like any educational institutions elsewhere in the world, the fundamental aspiration of Philippine education is to improve the quality of life of every Filipino.

4. The management of Philippine education was trifocalized in 1994-1995 – the Department of Education (DepEd) looks after basic education (primary and secondary), the Technical Vocational and Skills Development Authority is charged with post-secondary education; and the Commission on Higher Education oversees collegiate education. The responsibility for Early childhood education, particularly for the 5 year-olds, is shared between the Department of Education and the Department of Social Welfare and Development. With the passage of Republic Act 9155 (RA 9155) in 2001, further structural changes took place - the culture concerns of the basic education system was transferred to the National Commission for Culture and the Arts (NCCA), while those pertaining to sports was handed over to the Philippine Sports Commission (PSC). Despite these changes, however, DepED remains to be the biggest government bureaucracy in the country.

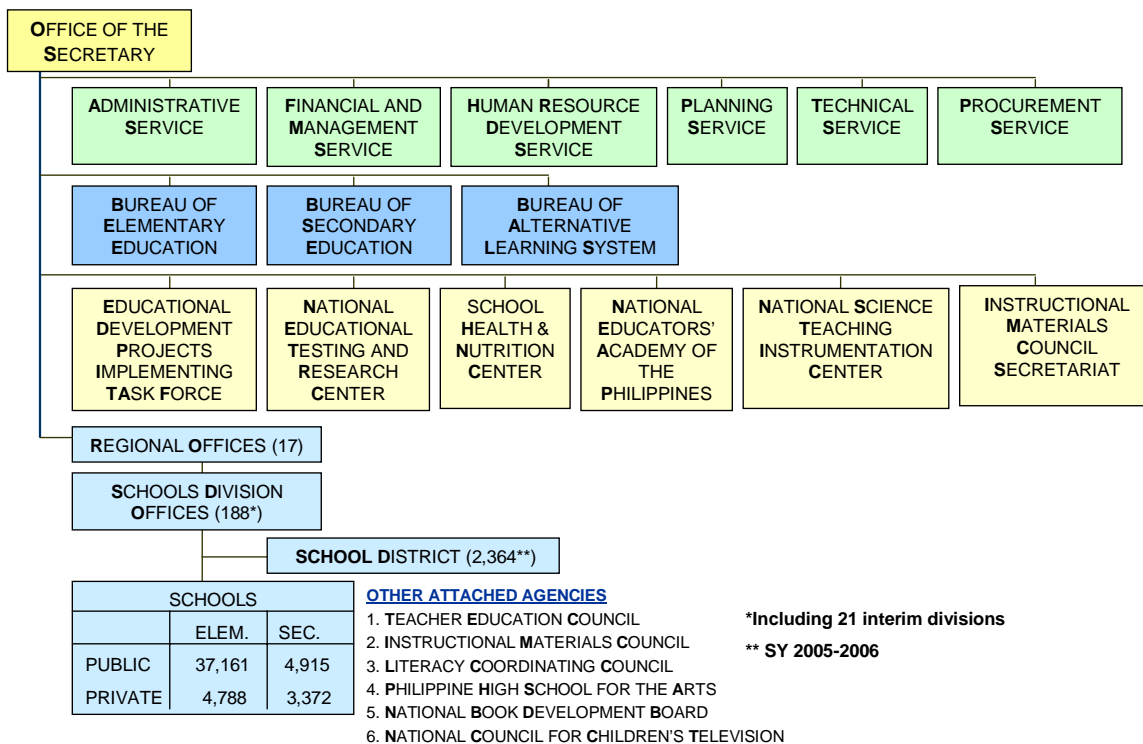
5. To promote policy coherence and coordination of these three (3) institutions, the Presidential Task Force on Education was organized in 2006. This Task Force convenes quarterly, or as needed, for cross-cutting issues and concerns affecting education in the country.

II. The Department of Education (DepED) as an Organization

6. DepED is headed by a Department Secretary who holds office in the DepEd Central Office. Below the Central Office are 17 Regional Offices, each headed by a Regional Director, 195 Division Offices each headed by Schools Division Superintendent, and 53,486 schools/learning centers across the country, with either a principal, a school head or a teacher-in-charge for each in the case of small, rural schools. Figure 3 shows the current organizational set-up of DepED.

7. The Secretary of Education is assisted by 4 Undersecretaries in the areas of: Regional Operations, Programs and Projects, Finance and Administration, and Legal Affairs, with each Undersecretary having an assigned Assistant Secretary. Owing to the need to address special concerns in basic education, 2 more Undersecretaries were given to DepEd to handle the areas of Muslim Education and a general Special Assistant to the Secretary, plus 2 other Assistant Secretaries to focus on Special Projects, and Special Concerns. These officials make up the Office of the Secretary Proper.

Figure 2. The Department of Education Organizational Chart



8. Backstopping the Office of the Secretary Proper are the different services, bureaus and centers which account to 54 directors and assistant directors. The formulation of policies, standards and program on curriculum development is undertaken by three bureaus: Elementary Education, Secondary Education, and Alternative Learning System. Five centers attached to the Department provide technical and administrative support: the Educational Development Projects Implementing Task Force for foreign-assisted projects, the National Education Testing and Research Center for nationwide testing and assessment, the School Health and Nutrition Center for school health and nutrition, the National Educators Academy of the Philippines for training and development of education managers, and the National Science Teaching Instrumentation Center for prototyping science and math equipment and materials for use in the classrooms.

9. In addition, there are Councils and their Secretariats that equally provide specialized services - the Instructional Materials Council and its Secretariat for all policies pertaining to textbooks and instructional materials to be used in the public schools, the Literacy Coordinating Council and its Secretariat for all policies pertaining to the development and coordination of literacy initiatives, the Teacher Education Council and its Secretariat for all policies concerning pre-service and in-service education of teachers and the Adopt a School Program Council and its Secretariat for all engagements in public schools involving the private sector.

10. In terms of functions, the Central Office sets policies and standards, looks after the provision of basic learning resources and provides overall leadership for the entire basic education sector. Regional Offices are likewise involved with regionwide-policy development, quality assurance for the entire region, regulation of private and non-government schools and providers, and the provision of administrative services like payroll servicing, in-service training, legal counseling, and serves as the validation point of the Basic Education Information System. Division Offices perform functions related to instructional supervision leadership, quality assurance, resource generation support to schools, library hub services, and BEIS management. The smallest, yet the most precious component of DepEd, are the schools and leaning centers where direct delivery of basic education services happen.

III. Curricular Policies, Educational Content and Teaching and Learning Strategies

11. The Basic Education Curriculum (BEC) is the national curriculum for basic education in the country. It sets the minimum learning competencies and teaching standards at every grade or year level in both elementary and secondary education. It likewise defines policies and standards on teaching and learning, as well as encourages the development of varied types of programs and projects that must be pursued to ensure attainment of such basic level competencies.

III.A Curriculum Content

III.A.1 Elementary Level

12. Under the Basic Education Curriculum (BEC) which was crafted in 2002 is a restructured New Elementary School Curriculum characterized by these features:

- Restructured learning areas to five: English, Filipino, Mathematics, Science and Makabayan
- Stronger integration of competencies and values within and across the learning areas
- Greater emphasis on the learning process and interdisciplinary modes of teaching
- Increased time on task to gain mastery of competencies of the basic tool subjects (English, Filipino, Mathematics and Science)
- Makabayan, the fifth learning area, serves as the “laboratory of life” or a practice environment. Among the learning areas, it is the most experiential, interactive area that will provide the Filipino learners interdisciplinary, and value laden (cultural, aesthetic, athletic, vocational, politico-economic, and moral value) education. It is the

learning area that will provide Filipino learners the quality time to demonstrate practical knowledge and life skills that have been gained, especially the skills of empathy, vocational efficiency and problem solving in daily life. Love of country serves as the unifying principle for the diverse values, and will cultivate in the learners a healthy personal and national self-concept which includes adequate understanding of Philippine history and genuine appreciation of one's local cultures, crafts, arts, music and games.

- Science aims to help every Filipino learner to gain a functional understanding of scientific concepts and principles linked with real-life situations, and acquire scientific skills, attitudes, and values necessary to analyze and solve day to day problems.

Below are the old and new curricula for elementary education.

Table 1. Old Elementary School Curriculum, Grades 1-6

Learning Area	Time Allotment					
	Grade 1	Grade 2	Grade 3	Grade 4	Grade 5	Grade 6
GMRC	20	20	20	20	20	20
Filipino	60	60	60	60	60	60
English	80	80	80	80	80	80
Math	60	60	60	60	60	60
Sibika/Kultura/HKS	40	40	40	40	40	40
Science and Health	40	40	40	40	40	40
MSEP	20	20	40	40	40	40
EPP	-	-	-	40	60	60
Total No. of Minutes Daily	320	320	340	360	380	380

Table 2. New Elementary School Curriculum, Grades 1-6 (Restructured)

Learning Area	Grade 1	Grade 2	Grade 3	Grade 4	Grade 5	Grade 6
Filipino	80	80	80	60	60	60
English	100	100	100	80	80	80
Math	80	80	80	60	60	60
Science & Health	Within English & Makabayan		40	60	60	60
Makabayan	60	60	60	100	120	120
Sibika, Kultura/HKS	(Sibika at Kultura)			40 (Heograpiya)	40 (Kasaysayan)	40 (Pamahalaan at Sibika)
EPP	Introduced only in Grades 4-6		40	40 Eduk. Pantahanan at Pangkabuhayan		
*MSEP				20	40	40
*EP/GMRC	Integrated In Sibika @ Kultura			20	40	40
Total Minutes Daily	320	320	360	360	380	380

13. Table 2 shows that simple scientific concepts and skills are taken up in English and Makabayan. Science begins as the children are taught to observe, monitor, and describe their interaction with their immediate environment. In Grade 3, the teaching of Science as a separate learning area begins. Science from Grade 3-6 includes basic health concepts, and thus the nomenclature Science and Health. Time allotment for Science is increased in Grades 4-6.

14. Other curricular policies revolve around making every Grade 3 pupil an effective reader, the implementation of bilingual policy, specifically on the use of Filipino and English as media of instruction, and supplemented by lingua franca in the early grades, the pursuit of alternative delivery modes to suit the needs of a specific group of learners, the implementation of multi-grade system of education, particularly for far-flung, rural areas, the use of distance education; the emphasis on the education of indigenous peoples and the use of ICT to enhance actual delivery of basic education and related services. All of these curricular policies are geared towards enriching the current basic education and in making education relevant to the needs of every child and learner groups.

III.A.2 Secondary Level

15. There are five learning areas in the secondary curriculum under the Basic Education Curriculum – Filipino, English, Science, Mathematics and Makabayan which integrates the subjects of Social Studies, Values Education, Physical Education and Values Education. The specific time allotments per learning area are in Tables 3 and 4. Just like in the elementary curriculum, the Makabayan area for high school also serves as a practice environment for holistic learning. It is designed to develop the personal, social and work/spatial skills of learners especially interpersonal skills, empathy with other cultures, vocational efficiency, problem solving and decision-making in daily life.

16. In case of Science as a learning area, the Integrated Science in 1st Year builds on elementary Science, and presents basic concepts in earth science, biology, and physics. In 2nd year, the learners focus on Biology, in 3rd year, Chemistry is taught, and 4th year, students take up Physics and Advanced Chemistry. The learners are exposed to laboratory work and in conducting investigatory projects outside the structured laboratory settings. Thus, the one-hour allotment shall be strictly teacher–student contact time for structured learning in the classroom and in the laboratory.

17. Content is delivered using a variety of media and resources. From a textbook-based content, schools are encouraged to use information and Communication technology (ICT) and community resources to widen access to knowledge and to enrich learning.

Table 3. Old Secondary Education Curriculum

Learning Area	1 st Year	2 nd Year	3 rd Year	4 th Year
Values Education	40	40	40	40
Filipino	40	40	40	40
English	40	40	40	40
Math	40	40	40	40
Araling Panlipunan	40	40	40	40
Science & Tech	80	80	80	80
P.E., Health & Musi	40	40	40	40
THE	80	80	80	80
Total Minutes Daily	400	400	400	400

Table 4. New Secondary Education Curriculum (Restructured)

Learning Areas	1 st Year	2 nd Year	3 rd Year	4 th Year
Filipino	60	60	60	60
English	60	60	60	60
Math	60	60	60	60
Science and Technology	60	60	60	60
Makabayan	180 mins/day for 4 days and 60 mins for 5 th day			
*Social Studies	60 (Phil. History)	60 (Asian Studies)	60 (World History)	60 (Economics)
*TEPP	60 mins/day for 4 days			
*MSEPP	60 mins. For 4 days			
*Edukasyon sa Pagpapahalaga	60 mins per week on its own, but	Within every learning area everyday		
Total Minutes Daily	300 - 480(maximum per	Day		

III.B Teaching and Learning Strategies

18. The teaching-learning process is generally interactive where learners, the teachers, instructional materials and information technology interact with one another. Learning is assessed using a variety of measures. The purpose is to

gather information about the learners' progress in holistic terms. The restructured curriculum involves innovative, interdisciplinary and integrative modes of institutional delivery. The new curriculum allows and encourages teachers to use the constructivism approach in teaching and learning to promote a student-centered interaction with the teacher serving as facilitator of learning.

19. The implementation of the curriculum includes a well-orchestrated delivery system such as the provision of teachers, principals, textbooks and other instructional materials, classrooms, kits, visual aids, equipment and other resources. Further, to promote inclusive education, the following are among the interventions/practices in many Philippine schools.

19.a Helping Disadvantaged Children and Schools

20. DepEd ensures that there is equity in spreading its meager resources. This explains why it is strengthening its Basic Education Information System to be able to capture accurate school-level statistics as basis for the deployment of crucial learning resources like teachers, principals, classrooms, furniture, books and operating budget. The less endowed schools receive more resources. Moreover, it is exerting all possible efforts to make its schools to become child-seeking. Through training, research and program interventions, school officials are encouraged to employ non-conventional techniques if only to help children in various difficult circumstances get quality basic education. In most instances, schools partner with the parents and other community stakeholders in carrying out these interventions. Focus on improving teacher effectiveness in hard-to-staff schools is also considered in all program interventions.

19.b. Multi-grade Schools

21. Multi-grade teaching is one of the strategies used in addressing the problems of small, rural and isolated schools. Brought about by a number of factors like difficult terrain and climatic conditions, the population in the community is sparse; and where families view their children as an important contributor of economic benefits, schools employ multi-grade teaching so that children and their families who seek basic education are not deprived of this basic human right.

22. To ease the burden of teachers and parents, DepEd has been providing specialized support to multi-grade schools, ranging from the organization of learning resource centers, development and production of multi-grade instructional materials, curriculum modification/adaptation, provision of specialized training for teachers and administrators, provision of classrooms and other basic educational resources. Tie ups with parents are also frequent, so that many of these parents serve as para-teachers in the classrooms. Finally, close monitoring and supervision of multi-grade classes is undertaken by a task force based at the division level called MG Schools Assistance Task Force.

19.c. Indigenous Peoples Education

23. As tried out and found successful in some of parts of the country, DepEd is now scaling up the implementation of programs that address the need of indigenous peoples. To them, relevant education is one that allows them to embrace the Basic Education Curriculum, while preserving their cultural heritage and traditions. Indigenized curriculum and materials and staff development as well are the most practical and acceptable interventions.

24. DepED, under the support of Australian government, is now developing a Framework for Indigenous Peoples Education, which puts together all possible initiatives for this sector, including the identification of standard inputs that are relevant and acceptable to concerned IP groups. The successful experience DepED had with the Project, Basic Education Assistance in Mindanao (BEAM), is being finalized that would rationalize all activities relevant to IP and Muslim education across the country.

19.d. Madrasah Education

25. In 2004, DepEd prescribed the standard Madrasah curriculum in the public schools that is now being observed by all madaris offering basic education. It is generally the Basic Education Curriculum, plus 2 additional subjects included - **Arabic Language** and **Islamic Values Education** (ALIVE). The DepEd directive was followed by its conduct of training programs for potential Muslim teachers that they may acquire new pedagogical skills and English Language proficiency. Not only will these interventions improve their teaching skills, it will likewise give them the opportunity to pass the government's Licensure Examination for Teachers, a requirement to become bonafide public school teachers.

19.e. Inclusive Education for Special Children

26. Approximately 3% of the public elementary school enrolment belong to the gifted category, while some 2% have various forms of physical disability. Thus, DepEd offers Distance Learning Program to meet the needs of these special children. It also provides opportunities for continuous upgrading of teacher's professional competencies through self--instructional learning modules.

IV. Main Policies, Achievements and Lessons Learned

This section describes the current policies, lessons learned and prevailing challenges confronted by the Philippine Government in providing quality basic education to all Filipinos as espoused in DepED's Phil-EFA 2015 National Plan of Action.

IV.1 Preschool Education

30. Pre-school or early childhood education for 5 year-olds is not free and compulsory, with a large part of it being provided by the private sector and the local government units through their day care centers. Due to worldwide studies which point to preschool education as a critical stepping stone to a child's formative education, DepEd tried out a small-scale preschool education program in 1993 among the 21 poorest provinces of the country, with feeding interventions among the pupils in schools. This generated favorable results among parents and teachers as pupil attendance rose significantly from 80% to 90%. Majority of the pupils also stayed on to complete the primary course of Grades 1 to 6. It should be understood that in the context of the Philippines, the incidence of drop out is highest in the first 3 grades of primary education.

31. While attendance rate improved, there were reports from teachers about the need to make Grade 1 pupils "un-learn" some of the things they were taught during their preschool year. In response, DepEd in 2004, formulated a policy to standardize preschool education curriculum and introduced an assessment system to measure the quality of learning gained by 5 year-olds from non-DepEd preschools i.e., those coming from day care centers and private providers.

32. DepEd first developed a standard curriculum for preschool education and basic instructional materials so that even community-organized classes and those run by the local governments can benefit from it. A Grade 1 Readiness Assessment was also introduced to all Grade 1 entrants in the public schools beginning 2005 to determine if indeed they are ready for formal instruction. The 2006-2007 data showed that less than half of Grade 1 pupils (40%-45%) were ready to take on the challenge of the Grade 1 curriculum. To arrest this, DepEd conducted training programs among the providers, including para-teachers in the day care centers. This is still ongoing up to this time, but overall, there is so much potential offered by preschool education such that public investments are being directed to this intervention. Finally, DepEd is presently collaborating with the legislature for a law to be passed, to make preschool education free and compulsory by 2010.

IV.2 Primary (Elementary) Education

33. Since primary education is free and compulsory, its main thrust is to enable every Filipino to become an effective reader and communicator that can be useful in becoming enlightened, disciplined, nationalistic, God-loving, creative, versatile and productive member of the community. Universal participation of school-aged children is desired.

34. One of the current strategies to improve both access and quality in primary education is School-Based Management (SBM). Principals are given additional powers, training and resources to innovate and improve school-wide

performance at own pace and own context. To this end, DepED through BESRA, formulated in 2006 the Standards and Framework for Effective Government and is being rolled out now to all schools. A support system recently launched is the provision of SBM grant for qualified schools to help them implement continuous improvement.

IV.3 Secondary Education

35. Secondary education is free and its desired outcome is to equip every Filipino with good spiritual and moral life, economic stability, relevant cultural values, competitive work skills, strong sense of national identity and the ability to adjust to rapidly changing environment. Low participation, high dropout, low completion and low achievement level are the major challenges confronting secondary education.

36. To make secondary education relevant and meaningful to the students, DepED strengthened the technical and vocational education component of the high school curriculum. Interested public schools are advised to consult with their communities and other stakeholders in defining the different courses to be offered to students. Once this is done, DepEd provides additional resources to schools to support their operations. Part of the goal of tech-voc education is to narrow down the gap between the demand and supply of labor in the communities.

IV.4 Alternative Learning System

37. The Philippines has a strong accreditation and equivalency system in place to give opportunities to out-of-school youth and adults. There is also close collaboration between DepEd and the local governments, the NGOs and the civil societies in the provision of literacy-related services. Presently, DepEd is reaching out to the out-of-school population through the administration of accreditation and equivalency testing twice a year beginning 2007.

V. Major Reforms and Innovations Introduced in the Educational System

V.A Philippine Education For All 2015 National Plan of Action

27. Focusing on the basic education level, the government, through the DepEd, participated in the global movement on Education For All in 1990, and continues to do so at present. After undertaking the 1st Education For All Plan for 1990-2000, a successor plan was developed, now known as the Philippine Education For All 2015 National Plan of Action (Phil-EFA 2015). This plan builds on the gains of the former EFA 2000 plan and saw the need for systemic reforms in order to achieve its 2015 goal of making every Filipino functionally literate.

28. Among others, the Phil-EFA 2015 contains eight (8) urgent production

tasks, to wit:

a) To initiate and sustain school assessment movement which essentially develops the culture of student assessment among stakeholders, and to use its results as a platform for identifying school and community actions for continuous school improvement;

b) To expand targeted coverage of quality-assured early childhood care and development programs

c) To expand the coverage of cost-effective adult literacy programs where integrating community-initiated interventions with government's programs is advocated;

d) To promote the practice of high quality teaching which pertains to developing better policies and standards for selecting, hiring, deploying and promoting teachers, as well as the creation of capabilities and conditions that can motivate teachers to continuously improve teaching practices;

e) To explore the possibilities of adding two more years to the current basic education cycle of 10 years to promote the development of higher level competencies among students;

f) To increase the level and quality of effort in curriculum development and instruction, including the continuous conduct of researches and development efforts in curriculum and instructional standards and to ensure that inclusive education will happen in all schools and learning centers

g) To establish a new framework for public funding of basic education where a closer partnership between national and local governments will be promoted to cover preschool, elementary, secondary and alternative education; and

h) To create a network of community-based groups for national and local attainment of EFA 2015 goals.

29. These 8 ambitious goals were disseminated nationwide across all stakeholders to ensure common understanding of government's policies and directions until 2015.

VI.A Basic Education Sector Reform Agenda (BESRA)

38. A closer look at the Phil-EFA 2015 objectives made the policy-makers realize that many of its EFA 2015 production tasks will prove difficult to attain unless and until drastic policy reforms are instituted immediately. This gave birth to the formulation of the Basic Education Sector Reform Agenda (BESRA) 2006-

2010 to address the gaps and inconsistencies at policy level, or the lack of it.

39. BESRA is a package of policy actions collected under 5 key reform thrusts, namely: **KRT1** - Continuous school improvement facilitated by active involvement of stakeholders through school-based management; **KRT2** - Better learning outcomes achieved by improved teacher standards; **KRT3** - Desired learning outcomes enhanced by national learning strategies, multi-sectoral coordination, and quality assurance; **KRT4** - improved impact on outcomes resulting from complementary services for early childhood education, alternative learning services and private sector participation; and **KRT5** - institutional culture change within DepED to facilitate attainment of KRTs 1-4. A set of pre-determined metrics expressed in specific performance indicators and required policy actions were developed to gauge whether the desired improvements in policies and standards are taking place. In sum, BESRA will establish conditions that will make possible the attainment of universal participation of all children of school-age, and universal completion at both primary and secondary education with satisfactory levels of achievement. Stakeholders and funding institutions are fully supportive of BESRA.

40. Nine (9) Technical Working Groups were organized last year for each KRT, composed of officials from within and outside DepEd, At present, over 30 policy actions or instruments have been developed and passed by DepEd management to better the teaching-learning conditions obtaining in the schools. Many of these new directives are being rolled out to all offices and schools for implementation.

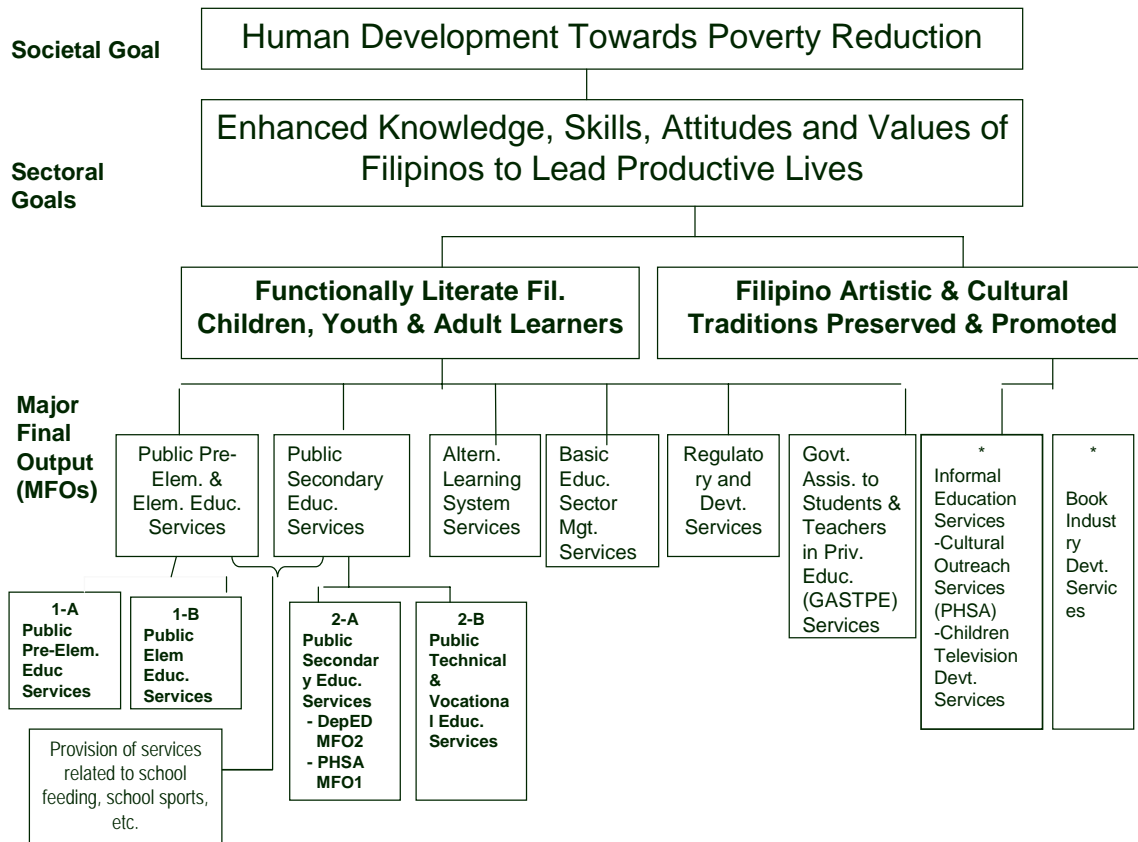
VI.B Public Expenditure Management Reform Program

41. Another on-going reform that affect the entire government bureaucracy, including DepED, is the Public Expenditure Management (PEM) initiated by the Department of Budget and Management. It shifts public spending from being goal-oriented into result-oriented, and public managers are held more accountable for the outcomes of such expenditures. An Organizational Performance Indicators Framework (OPIF) is developed for each agency (including DepEd) as a strategy to help agencies re-focus priorities, identify targets, assess accomplishments and report results. Some of the characteristics of OPIF are as follows: i) shift to output/outcomes performance indicators, ii) clarify expected performance and accountability of government agencies, iii) encourage agencies to focus efforts on the delivery of outputs relevant to the goal, iv) establish performance management system where organization performance targets cascaded down to lower levels units and used as basis for performance-based compensation. The OPIF Logframe for DepEd is in Figure 3.

VI.C Procurement Reform

42. Simultaneous with BESRA and the Public Expenditure Management Reform Program, is the implementation of Republic Act 9184, otherwise known as An Act Providing for the Modernization, Standardization and Regulation of the Procurement Activities of the Government and For Other Purposes. This law is seen as “one of the best procurement laws in the world” as it promotes open and fair competition among interested parties. The reform has five (5) governing principles, namely: i) Transparency in the procurement process; ii) Competitiveness by extending equal opportunity for all; iii) Streamlined procurement process - uniformly applied to all government procurement transactions - simple and made adaptable to modern technology; iv) System of accountability; and v) Public monitoring of the procurement process and contract implementation. As a consequence of DepEd’s adherence to this law, its procurement volume increased for almost the same level of budget made available for similar purposes, i.e., more goods are purchases for almost the same level of budget.

Figure 3: The Organizational Performance Indicators Framework of DepEd



VI.D Structural Reform under the Organizational Rationalization Plan

43. There is an on-going rationalization of the functions and staffing of government offices in the Philippines and DepEd is not an exemption. It started in 2005. and decisions on DepEd's proposal not will soon be out from the Department of Budget and Management this year. Overall, DepEd recommended an organizational structure that can fully support the demands of its schools and offices and the general public, keeping in mind internal efficiency and accountability. Should this be approved, there will be major changes in the functions of the DepEd central and field offices and the schools.

VII. Main Policies, Achievements and Lessons Learned

44. On BESRA. Modest improvements in major EFA indicators have been recorded since BESRA was implemented in 2005. Participation, completion, cohort survival and dropout rates have improved impressively. Further, the implementation of reforms under BESRA gained positive results particularly in triggering improvements at school level via school-based management. All stakeholders are supporting and joining the BESRA band-wagon. Local Government Units also started to appreciate the value of BESRA and started to invest using the Special Education Fund (SEF). Donor community supports BESRA by providing financial assistance and windows to further improve the system and educational outcomes.

45. Initial success of BESRA implementation was made possible through the interplay of major education stakeholders. The involvement of education partners makes the implementation of reforms relatively easy particularly the support from donor community.

46. Access to Education. The attainment of universal primary education is a big challenge to DepED right now. Our global commitment on MDG is one of the paramount considerations why the government is continuously expanding access to basic education. Aside from establishing elementary schools in every barangay and high school in every municipality, DepED is pursuing strategic programs and activities to address the educational needs of children, youth and adults especially for those who have some difficulties and wishes to attend the elementary level, the following were employed (1) Alternative Delivery mode (ADM) such as: Modified In-School-Off-School Approach (MISOSA), Instructional Management by Parents, Adults and Teachers (IMPACT), Distance Education, Indigenous Peoples Education, Madrasah Education and Multi-grade Program. These modalities cater to the needs of students in difficult circumstances based on formal education. For the secondary level: Basic Literacy Program, Accreditation and Equivalency Program and BP-OSA (Balik-Paaralan for OSY Adults) which are mainly modular learning and through mobile teachers or community-based instructional managers for those who are in unique or difficult situations.

47. Preschool Education. One of the challenges in the basic education sector is the incidence of high dropout in early grades in schooling particularly Grades 1 to 3 due to lack of preschool experience. While DepED is implementing the 8-week curriculum for Grade 1 entrants without preschool experience, high dropout in early grades continue to challenge the system.

48. To address this problem, DepED is aggressively expanding the coverage of access to preschool to include Day Care Centers. Very recently, the President has issued Executive Order No. 685 mandating DepED to expand preschool coverage to include Day Care Centers currently under the supervision of Department of Social Welfare and Development. Right now, DepED is substantially increasing budget for preschool education and tightening standards and quality for privately run preschool institutions. Part of our legislative agenda, DepED is pursuing a legislative measure to make preschool part of Education Ladder making basic education cycle 11 years.

49. Quality of preschool teacher remains to be a big challenge to DepED. While privately owned preschool institutions are hiring relatively good preschool teachers because they can afford to pay them higher than in public preschool. Public preschools are usually being facilitated with undergraduate teachers since the remuneration is very low. Recognizing the critical role of preschool in improving access to primary school and reducing dropout in early grades and with the directive of the chief executive to expand preschool education, we are now lining up strategic policy formulations and activities to expand and strengthen preschool education.

50. Our main objective is to reduce substantially or even eliminate high dropout incidence in early grades by preparing incoming grade1 to the rigors of formal schooling. As a result of presidential directives to expand the preschool coverage, DepED will support the existing preschool in the public system and raise quality by providing extensive training programs for teachers and provide additional allowance until they became qualified as nationally paid teachers. We are also tightening compliance to standards promulgated by the department to curb with the substandard preschool across the country.

51. Learning Outcomes. Utilizing the result of National Achievement Test in 2006, DepED has identified 1,898 Elementary and 264 Secondary low performing schools nationwide and provided substantial support and interventions under the Project Turning Around Low Performing School. Under the project, substantial inputs were provided to identified schools such as; teacher training, provision of additional supplementary materials for learning, science and mathematics equipments and increased MOOE. To date, the 1,898 Elementary schools have been reduced to 391 low performing schools. These remaining schools will be given substantial intervention to improve performance and finally eliminate low performing schools.

52. Under the Basic Education Sector Reform Agenda (BESRA), DepED is now drilling down school funds directly to all schools to enable the school management and community to identify activities that could trigger improvements school performance both in access and quality. Likewise, DepED is strengthening English, Science and Mathematics Instruction by providing relevant training and degree programs to teachers particularly those non-majors in said subjects.

53. Pre-service Teacher Training, Recruitment and Deployment. As mentioned in the discussion on the current reforms in DepED, one of the Key reform thrusts under the Basic Education Sector Reform Agenda is Teacher Education and Development which paved way to the formulation of National Competency-Based Teacher Standards (NCBTS) which will govern activities related to teacher education both pre-service and in-service. NCBTS will be used as basis for teacher education and development, hiring and deployment of teachers and promotion as well. NCBTS will practically overhaul the policy on hiring and promotion which is based on credentialism.

54. As a result of the formulation of NCBTS, a Memorandum of Understanding was executed between the Department of Education, Commission on Higher Education (CHED), Civil Service Commission (CSC), Professional Regulations Commission (PRC) and Groups of Teacher Education Institutions (TEI's) adopting NCBTS as the common framework and primary basis for teacher education and development programs and policies both in pre-service and in-service. This is to ensure that DepED is getting the right qualities of teachers.

VIII. The Role of Education System in Combating Poverty, As Well As Other Forms of Social Exclusion and Cultural Marginalization

55. In a country where majority of its population thrive below the official poverty line, the DepEd joins all agencies of government in uplifting the quality of life of the Filipinos, and is striving hard to get all school-aged children to attend school, and to keep them there so that they can learn. Various interventions are implemented annually, ranging from teaching and learning, to health and nutrition needs of the students. These programs are done in collaboration with other national and local government agencies.

56. In addition to what DepEd implements for the public schools, it is also an active member of the National Anti-Poverty Commission under the Office of the President, created under RA 8425 otherwise known as the Social Reform and Poverty Alleviation Act. This is the policy-making body that oversees, coordinates and synchronizes social reform and poverty alleviation programs of the national government. DepEd is a critical link in ensuring that safety net programs and mechanisms developed by NAPC reach the school children and their families.

57. Primary education is free and compulsory, while secondary education is free. However, student drop outs have reported the high private cost of public education, e.g., those spent for student lunches, vehicle fares, school supplies, and others. To address this, DepEd is strictly enforcing the “no collection” policy to bar teachers and principals from collecting money from students for purposes of projects, extra-curricular activities, and the like. The “no collection” policy likewise extends to teachers and principals to bar organizations and others from exacting money from them for various kinds of contributions in the community. Finally, the policy on school uniforms has been relaxed so that students can come to school in simple, decent and clean clothes. All possible known barriers to schooling is being eradicated by DepEd.

COUNTRY EXPERIENCES

IX. INCLUSIVE EDUCATION: THE WAY OF THE FUTURE

58. The Philippine Constitution vests in every Filipino a right to quality education at all levels, with primary (elementary) education as free and compulsory, while secondary education is free. This commitment of the State to make quality education accessible to all is the very foundation of our inclusive education policy, such that DepED is using all of its resources to ensure that no one should be left out in terms of basic education opportunities. In addition to providing for the needs of the formal education system, DepEd is scaling up the Madrasah Education for Muslim Filipinos, the Special Education Programs for the gifted, physically and mentally disabled children, and the budding Indigenous Peoples Education Program for all other groups of indigenous peoples. It is due to DepEd’s intensity of undertaking these special programs for the marginalized that most foreign funding institutions have manifested active participation. Combinations of alternative delivery modes and alternative learning services are being employed to deliver basic education services to the poorest of the poor.

59. In keeping with DepEd’s inclusive education policy, it is partnering with various international, national, local and private institutions in ensuring that target groups are identified, programs and projects are customized for their peculiarities, and that resources are delivered. Cultural diversity as an example, is one of the reasons why education and social exclusion takes place. The geographic make up of the country makes it difficult to implement one common curriculum acceptable to all social groups. Many of the Indigenous Peoples and Muslim communities in the country are reluctant to embrace the national education system on the basis that it might dilute and finally lose their cultural heritage and traditions.

60. The Phil-Education For All 2015 Plan is the major legal framework for inclusive education. The second overarching objective of EFA is for all school-aged children to be in school or are given education in any form of modalities based on the formal curriculum. EFA embraces all Filipinos regardless of any

circumstance. Exclusion normally happens as a residual effect of extreme poverty and absence of information. Cultural groups are normally over-protective of their cultural heritage which hinder them to accept any opportunities to open up and accept new things.

X. Systems, Links and Transitions

61. Poverty, peace and order problems and cultural diversity are the major challenges in ensuring educational and social inclusion. Based on the study on Causative Factors of Dropping Out under the assistance of UNICEF, poverty remains to be the main reason why many Filipino Children shy away from school. Children in difficult circumstances and with extreme poverty alienate themselves from school and chose to work for a living. While government is steadfastly reaching the unreached via alternative modalities, still, many families in extreme poverty never availed of the free education services offered by the government.

62. There is also a special group of children who, for one reason or another, have not been officially registered by their biological parents. As such, they do not have certificates of birth, nor have official names which are required upon enrolment in schools. A few cases encountered in the past indicate that this is a traumatic experience among affected children. The challenge that needs to be confronted is where and how to find them, when being “unregistered” already deter them from identifying themselves as one.

63. Various forms of barriers also include geographical in low income countries may also be considered as a reason for exclusion. Areas with steep or difficult curves, heavy doors or small doors in the classrooms, lack of proper lanes designated for people with disabilities impede their full participation.

64. Financing interventions to address inclusive education is a touch area. DepEd budgets which have been perennially inadequate, limit its capability to really provide basic learning needs of the Filipino children and their families. The displaced families which include school-aged children lose chances to continue schooling. Families also lose their source of income because of displacement which makes it impossible for them to go back to school at soonest time possible.

65. Involving all possible stakeholders in educational planning and other activities resulted to positive result. Parents, community members and local government units are very powerful partners in achieving universal inclusive education. Supportive national and local policies are also facilitating inclusive education. An example of this is the full implementation of decentralization through School-Based Management strategy to trigger improvements in the grassroots. Decentralization policy provided enough flexibility to divisions and schools to innovate to attain EFA goals. Under SBM, principals are given enough flexibility and powers to manage school operation. One of the critical role of

principal is to ensure that all school-age children within their catchments area. One of the strategy of ensuring that all school-aged children are in school is mapping saturating the entire catchments area and identify those school-aged children not in school and bring them back to school or offer other form of educational modalities. This is a very effective strategy to ensure inclusive education.

66. DepED is now aggressively promoting the Alternative Delivery Modes (ADM) in the public school system to address the educational opportunities of those who dropout from the system. DepEd is also expanding the coverage of ALS programs to provide educational opportunities to Out-of-school Children and adults. DepED is now starting to use technology in delivering basic education across the country. While this strategy is still far from being desired due to funding limitation, the current leadership is strongly committed to use ICT in education.

Learners and Teachers

As discussed earlier, Alternative Delivery Modes (ADM) is one of the strategies to make education in the country more inclusive since it caters to the needs of children in difficult circumstances. Under ADM, students can acquire minimum learning competencies while doing other economic activities.

The no collection and no uniform policies of DepED has gained stakeholders thumbs up because it really pro poor policy. Children can now go to school without having to worry about contributions and uniforms.

2.3 LEARNERS AND TEACHERS

New approaches to teaching and learning

The new Basic Education Curriculum of 2002 approaches is now being implemented . Generally, the restructured curriculum aims to raise the quality and graduates of our Filipino learners including empowering them for life-long learning.. The curriculum is restructured to promote reciprocal or two-way interaction between the students and teachers, between students themselves by collaborative learning and between students and instructional materials, between students and multi-media sources and between teachers of different subjects (collaborative teaching). However, there's a curriculum updates/ modification for children with disability, with special needs including the gifted and the talented , children with mental retardation, production of resource materials for blind and children with low vision in the elementary and secondary levels,

CBTS is the common framework for quality teaching from pre-service to in-service by the Teacher Education Council (TEC). A special component program to supplement the increase in education opportunities for all, to improve student learning outcomes and supports the DepED thrust are: the provision of a demand-driven in-service training for teachers, scholarships training for teachers, administrators, and supervisors with the end in view of developing a trained manpower to handle inclusive education program for all special children and at the same time recognizes the work done by the commitment and dedicated teachers, administrators and supervisors through awards and incentives.

The 2002 Basic Education Curriculum was designed primarily for inclusive education. Enough flexibility in terms of approaches was introduced particularly in responding to the needs of each individual learner. Teachers are being trained on constructivist approach to facilitate more dynamic and student-centered teaching and learning to unleash students' potentials.

In 2001, DepED through the Bureau of Elementary Education launched the Every Child A Reader Program (ECARP) which aims primarily to ensure that Grades 1-IV pupils are able to read at their own levels. Under the program, no pupils will be promoted to Grade IV unless he or she meets the reading standards under the program. This is to eliminate non-readers in Grades IV- VI and in secondary level as well. Substantial time is given for reading session particularly in Grades 1 to 3.

Under BESRA, the 4th Key Reform Thrusts is dedicated for ECE and Alternative Learning System to improve impact on outcomes resulting from complementary ECE, ALS and private sector participation. The delineation of function between Formal and Alternative Learning System was clearly defined in the Implementing rules and regulation of Republic Act 9155. Formal Education offers broad general education under the formal modality. Alternative Learning System caters to the educational needs of Out-of-school Youths and Adults aged 16 and above. Out of school children under school aged 6-15 will be addressed via ADM under the framework of Formal Education. No duplication of interventions to ensure inclusion of all educable citizens.